

ajnAna and its subduing

The lakshaNa of ajnAna has been stated by ChitsukhAchArya as:-

अनादिभावरूपं यद्विज्ञानेन विलीयते । तदज्ञानमिति प्राज्ञा लक्षणं संप्रचक्षते ॥

ajnAna has shuddha chaitanya as its vishaya. That is to say, it covers shuddha chaitanya. Consequently, shuddha chaitanya is unknown to us and its knowledge removes the ajnAna and results in Moksha. [Here it may be noted that shuddha chaitanya always shines as sat and chit. However, it does not shine as akhanDa paripUrNa-Anada. Hence, it stands to reason that there is AvaraNa of shuddha chaitanya. In moksha, shuddha chaitanya shines as paripUrNa-Ananda. शुद्धरूपायश्चितः प्रकाशमानत्वेऽपि तस्या एव परिपूर्णाद्याकारेणाप्रकाशमानत्वात् , तदर्थं तस्या एवावरणकल्पनात्, परिपूर्णाद्याकारस्य मोक्षदशानुवृत्तत्वेन शुद्धचिन्मात्रत्वात्।]

This ajnAna covering shuddha chaitanya is known as mUla-ajnAna. It is defined as शुद्ध-ब्रह्म-आवरक-अज्ञानम्.

However, when we say - अज्ञाता शुक्तिः - shukti is unknown - it appears that ajnAna covers shukti as well. However, since darkness cannot cover darkness, ajnAna cannot cover shukti. ajnAna covers only chaitanya.

So, what exactly happens here? What is the mechanism behind the assertion - “shukti is unknown”?

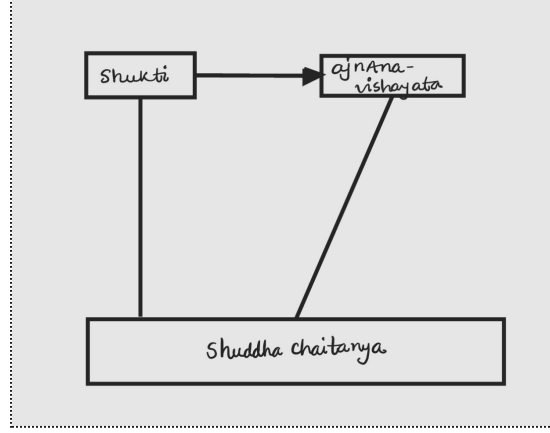
Explanation

ajnAna has shuddha chaitanya as vishaya. That means, shuddha chaitanya has ajnAna-vishayatA. However, this ajnAna-vishayatA is not an intrinsic feature of shuddha chaitanya, rather it is a superimposed feature. That is, ajnAna-vishayatA is adhyasta in shuddha chaitanya.

Shukti is swarUpa-adhyasta in shuddha chaitanya and appears as an avachchhedika thereof, just as pot is an avachchhedaka of space giving rise to pot-space i.e. pot-avachchhinna-space. Similarly, shukti gives rise to shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya.

Since shukti is an avachchhedikA of shuddha chaitanya wherein the ajnAna-vishayatA is adhyasta, shukti appears as an avachchhedikA of shuddha-chaitanya-nishTha-ajnAna-vishayatA and hence the transaction - 'shukti is unknown' - takes place.

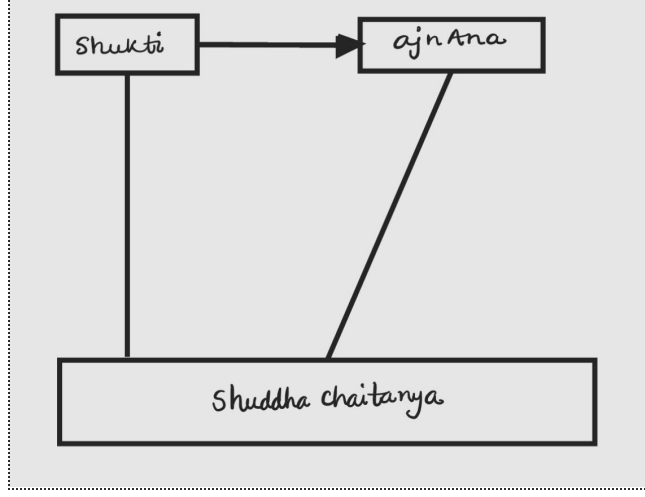
BAla BOdhinI says (page 874) - शुद्धचैतन्यनिष्ठा-अज्ञानविषयतायां घटादयः अवच्छेदकाः एव न अज्ञानविषयाः इति भावः ।



This vyavahAra - shukti is unknown - gives rise to the usage 'shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna'. However, it is to be understood that what is known as shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is essentially mUla-ajnAna only whose vishayatA in shuddha chaitanya is delimited by shukti.

That is to say, mUla-ajnAna-of-shuddha-chaitanya having shukti as the visheshaNā is called shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna or in short, shukti-ajnAna. Shukti is the avachchhedikA (vyAvartaka/visheshaNā) of shuddha chaitanya being swarUpa-adhyasta in shuddha chaitanya. Since ajnAna is swarUpa-adhyasta in shuddha chaitanya as well, shukti appears as visheshaNā of ajnAna also. And therefore, one feels -- shukti is an object of ignorance (अज्ञाता शुक्तिः).

BAlabodhinI says this in page 865 - अतः चैतन्य-अन्तर्भावे अविद्या-जड-योः सामानाधिकरण्यं वर्तते, स एव एक-आश्रय-आश्रितत्व-सम्बन्धः। एकस्मिन् आश्रये शुद्धचैतन्ये अविद्या-जड-योः आश्रितत्वात् जडावच्छिन्नं चैतन्यम् आवृतम् इति लोकानां व्यपदेशः।



Mechanism of “Shukti is known”

When shukti-pramA arises, the transaction - ‘shukti is unknown’ - no longer takes place. It is clear then that shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is unable to produce its effect - ‘shukti is unknown’. We want to know what exactly is the mechanism behind that.

Is there a nAsha (destruction) of shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna destroyed? Or,

Is there an abhibhava (subduing) of shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna?

Here, SiddhAnta Bindu (DakshiNAmUrti MaTha edition pg 112) states that it is mere abhibhava of shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna and not nAsha.

It takes an analogy of ChandrakAnta MaNi. This has an attribute to prohibit the burning-capacity of fire if it is near. However, if there are uttejaka mantra, then this maNi is incapable to prohibit the burning-capacity of fire. The entity analogous to ChandrakAnta-MaNi is shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna, uttejaka-mantra is shukti-pramA, the transaction - ‘shukti is unknown’ - is akin to prohibition of burning capacity of fire.

Thus, only when there is absence of shukti-pramA (uttejaka-mantra), the shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is able to produce its effect namely AvaraNa.

AvaraNa is defined in SiddhAnta Bindu as - प्रमाण-जन्य-अन्तःकरण-वृत्ति-अभाव-सहकृत (विशिष्ट) अज्ञानं सति भाति अपि वस्तुनि, नास्ति, न भाति इति, प्रतीति-जनन-समर्थम् आवरणम् इति उच्यते.

In Advaita Siddhi, AvaraNa is defined as avidyA-chit-sambandha and stated as AvaraNa-kriya-yogyatA.

AvaraNa-kriya is defined as नास्ति न प्रकाशत इति व्यवहार एवाभिज्ञादिसाधारणः; अस्ति प्रकाशत इत्येतद्व्यवहाराभावो वा आवरणकृत्यम्, whereas AvaraNa is defined as आवरणं च तद्योग्यता अज्ञान(चित्)संबन्धरूपा सुषुप्त्यादिसाधारणी आब्रह्मज्ञानमवतिष्ठते।

That basically means that pramA-abhAva-vishishTa-tva is the prateeti-janakatA-avachchhedaka. The absence of janakatA-avachchhedaka i.e. absence of pramA-abhAva-vishishTatva i.e. presence of shukti-pramA makes the shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna incapable to produce its effect. Once janakatA-avachchhedaka comes back, again this transaction -'shukti is unknown' - comes back. Hence, it is said that there is temporary subduing i.e. abhibhava of the AvaraNa and there is no permanent destruction i.e. nAsha of AvaraNa. The permanent nAsha happens on account of Brahma VidyA.

Question: Why is abhibhava accepted and not permanent destruction of shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna?

Answer: Because if the shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is permanently destroyed, then shukti should always be revealed. That is contrary to anubhava. Despite shukti-jnAna, subsequently again shukti is seen to be unknown.

Question: ajnAna is one. So, when there is temporary subduing of shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna, by that very subduing, there should be revelation of shuddha chaitanya. Why should one wait for the removal of shuddha-chaitanya-vishayaka-jnAna?

Answer: Because the subduing of the AvaraNa is delimited by shukti. BALabodhinI states in page 865 - घटादि-आकारया प्रमाणजन्या-अन्तःकरणवृत्त्या घटादि-अधिष्ठान-चैतन्य-अभिव्यक्तौ घटादि-अवच्छेदेन-एव तदधिष्ठानचैतन्यनिष्ठ-आवरण-अभिभवो जायते इति न घटादि-आकार-वृत्त्या शुद्ध-चैतन्य-प्रकाश-आपत्तिः।

Thus, the sum and substance of the discussion made hereinabove is as under:-

The ajnAna is one and that is mUla-ajnAna which covers shuddha chaitanya. This ajnAna and its products such as shukti are both swarUpa-adhyasta in shuddha chaitanya. Shuddha chaitanya is delimited by shukti giving rise to

shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya like space is delimited by pot giving rise to pot-avachchhinna-space. Shukti appears as vyAvartaka/avachchedika/visheshaNa of shuddha-chaitanya which has adhyAsa with ajnAna as well as ajnAna-vishayatA. Therefore, shukti appears as a visheshaNa of ajnAna (shukti-ajnAna) and ajnAna-vishayatA is delimited by shukti.

This gives rise to the usual transaction - 'shukti is unknown'. This transaction gives rise to the usage of shukti-ajnAna or shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna. However, it is essentially mula-ajnAna only wherein the ajnAna-vishayatA in shuddha chaitanya is delimited by shukti.

This shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is capable to produce the Avarana-kriya on account of presence of janakatA-avachchedaka which is shukti-pramA-viraha-vishishTatva. Thus, it is only shukti-pramA-viraha-vishishTa-shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna that is capable of producing AvaraNa-kriya. The absence of janakatA-avachchedaka i.e. the presence of shukti-pramA temporarily subdues the capacity of shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna like chandrakAnta maNi in case of presence of uttejaka-mantra. And it comes back again when shukti-pramA goes. This is called abhibhava.

In the case of shuddha-chaitanya-vishayaka-pramA, there is nAsha of mUla-ajnAna whereas in all other cases, there is abhibhava. This abhibhava of mUla-ajnAna is also delimited by shukti etc and there is no possibility of objection regarding luminosity of shuddha chaitanya.

Alternative prakriyAs

Certain alternative prakriyAs are also adduced for clear conception wherein shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is accepted to be destroyed and not merely subdued. In these prakriyAs, there is nAsha of shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna and not merely abhibhava as discussed above.

Here, in this approach also, there are two sub-approaches. ajnAna itself is accepted to be one or many.

In case of one-ajnAna approach, there is only one ajnAna, which is mUla-ajnAna. And this mUla-ajnAna has several avasthA i.e. states like water has different avasthA namely bubbles. Here, these avasthA-ajnAna are infinite in number. Shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is one such avasthA-ajnAna. Also, there is tAdAtmya of these avasthA-ajnAna with mUla-ajnAna. The avasthA-ajnAna is defined as आवरण-विक्षेप-शक्ति-द्वय-युक्तं ब्रह्म-ज्ञान-अन्य-ज्ञान-नाशयं मूलाज्ञानेन तादात्म्य-आपन्नम् अज्ञानम् (LaghuchandrikA page 487 Old edition).

In the case of many-ajnAna approach, there are infinite ajnAna, namely tUla-ajnAna. These ajnAnAs are not in tAdAtmya with mUla-ajnAna. Shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya-Avaraka-ajnAna is one such tUla-ajnAna. It is defined as आवरण-विक्षेप-शक्ति-द्वय-युक्तं ब्रह्म-ज्ञान-अन्य-ज्ञान-नाशयं मूलाज्ञानेन तादात्म्य-अनापन्नम् अज्ञानम्.

Question: If there are infinite number of avasthA-ajnAna/tUla-ajnAna in shukti-avachchhinna-chaitanya, then even when one of them is destroyed by shukti-pramA, still shukti would be unknown as the others are present.

Answer: Not so. As that shukti-pramA acts as a pratibandhaka to rest of the avasthA-ajnAna/tUla-ajnAna. It is basically like bhIru-bhaT-vat-apasaraNam, kaTa-vat-samveshTanam or like chandrakAnta-maNi and uttejaka-mantra. The sum and substance is that the rest of the ajnAna are incapable to produce their effects and even if they are present, they are as good as absent.

These discussions can be seen in BAAla BOdhinI pages 864-874.

Relevant discussions can also be seen at

<https://sudhanshushekhar.wordpress.com/2024/02/09/lakshanas-of-avidya/#more-6854>

<https://sudhanshushekhar.wordpress.com/2024/01/16/vishaya-of-avidya/>

SiddhAnta Lesha Sangrah: Page 157-179 Chaukhamba edition.